

News from Rep. Stephanie Herseth

For Immediate Release

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HERSETH JOINS BIPARTISAN EFFORT TO DELAY FSA OFFICE CLOSURES

October 7, 2005, Washington, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Stephanie Herseth has cosponsored legislation to stop the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) from moving forward with the “FSA Tomorrow” plan. Under the plan, 14 Farm Service Association (FSA) county offices in South Dakota are targeted for closure.

Herseth, a member of the House Agriculture Committee, is joining a bipartisan group of farm state Members of Congress to introduce the bill, which would prevent USDA from using any funds to carry out plans to close, move or consolidate a large number of FSA offices until the next Farm Bill has been completed.

Herseth said, “Although FSA claims that this proposal will streamline its bureaucracy, you gain no efficiency by closing down busy offices and forcing producers to drive even further to do their FSA business. It simply doesn’t make sense to close those offices that are operating as efficient and necessary lifelines to farm families in South Dakota. If anything, the offices that I have visited in South Dakota are overburdened as they work to provide farmers and ranchers with access to critical price support, conservation, and disaster programs.”

She continued, “I am proud to join with a group of colleagues from both sides of the aisle to stop this process until Congress can review the proposal and ensure that any consolidation proposal not leave farmers and ranchers in South Dakota and across the country without access to the vital services that FSA provides.”

USDA’s “FSA Tomorrow” plan would close nearly one-third of FSA county offices nationwide. The plan requires that each state identify a specific number of county offices that would be closed.

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Congresswoman Stephanie Herseth serves South Dakota in the U.S. House of Representatives. She is a member of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of moderate Democrats committed to fiscal discipline and strong national security, and is co-chair of the Rural Working Group, which is dedicated to raising the profile of issues important to rural America. She also serves on three committees vital to South Dakota's interests: Agriculture, Veterans' Affairs and Resources.